

REBEL DESTINY

965 head was clearest in the quiet of the early morning. A stillness so pronounced that we could feel it surrounded us at the base camp, for at Gankwe the drums had been replaced in the shrines of the gods for whom they speak, and no more guns saluted the spirit of Zimbi, or warned away the evil dead with the powder which was distasteful to ghosts. Zimbi was buried, the grave diggers had bathed and put on fresh loin cloths, the village had been purified, and all was still.

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512 From our shelter, watching the haze lift, we could see that the river had fallen; the tangled grasses at the bank showed fully a hand's breadth of fresh brown that had the day before been under water. With the coming of the sun things began to stir. The lizards appeared, the chickens came to peck at our shoes, looking for crumbs, and boats began to make shadows across the opposite bank, as the Gankwe women in their small corials went to their fields. At the bow would be a little girl, or a yet smaller

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[168] boy—as young as four perhaps, for the older ones went with the men to learn a man's work—helping to take the boat up the fast water. All this went on quietly, until we espied three boats running down the rapids and pivoting about in the still water toward our landing place. As they came nearer, we could see that the boats carried no load, and our host, the director of the belata-collecting station, explained that these boats were new and were being taken down river for sale.

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"All the large boats come from top-side," he said. "The men take them clear around to the Marowynne River by way of the canals and there carry loads in them to the stations in the interior. The Saramacca men are fine canoe-men. They like them on the Marowynne. . . . You could use a large boat for your trip up river. Maybe the man will sell one."

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[304] The man in charge of the little flotilla stood more than six feet tall. His face was intricately cicatrized, and he carried himself with a dignity and reserve that surpassed even the way of the village chiefs.

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tion of falling in love, and the woman is inordinately proud ⁵³²
 of her pieces of wood since each one betokens the affection ⁵³⁰
 of a male. A great part of the love-life among the Djukas ⁵³¹
 is wrapped up in these carved household implements.

Those unfortunate natives who are not clever at handling ⁵³²
 a knife must trade fish or game or some other personal pos- ⁵³³
 session for sanni produced by a more deft craftsman. ⁵³⁵
 Almost any Bush Negro can hunt, fish, and care for a wife,
 but a man's value is enhanced in the eyes of the woman when
 he can carve artistically. The women appreciate him and the
 men respect him. Wood carving, therefore, is assiduously
 cultivated by the Bush Negroes from early childhood.

As sanni is a prized commodity everywhere, exchangeable ⁵³²
 for female favours, a great deal of time is spent on each ⁵³²
 individual piece. A single comb may take weeks to carve.
 The women are very good judges of sanni, and can tell a
 good piece at a glance. With such a critical audience, the
 Djuka artist is careful of his skill, and few awkward or
 ill-formed designs are seen. Boys between the ages of eight
 and ten years may be proficient carvers, and critical elders
 preside over their work, ready to point out any minute
 mistake. The father or uncle who is expert with the knife
 will train his son or nephew in the same tradition, so that
 certain families are known for their beautiful work.

This erotic significance of the wood carvings makes them
 difficult to obtain. The woman who sells one is not parting ⁵³³
 with a domestic utensil so much as with a treasured me-
 mento. Sentimental attachments are bound to appear. As

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sand. A few chisels and carpenter's tools can occasionally ³²² be found. Where compasses or dividers cannot be obtained, a nail and piece of string are often used to execute the involved serpentine patterns.

Bush Negro sanni is not used for trading purposes. A ⁴³⁸ few pieces find their way down to the coast, of course, but ³²² they are never articles of commerce among the Djukas. In some villages, and particularly among the Paramacca tribe, it is practically impossible to obtain many carvings. But the willingness to part with these objects naturally varies with the village and the individual. Being known to the natives greatly facilitates trade.

One outstanding feature of this work is the complete ³²² absence of colour. The finished piece shows the natural hue ⁵³² of the wood, and rarely anything more. An occasional variation is obtained by inlaying with racuda wood, brownheart, or purpleheart, but tints and dyes are seldom applied. A different shade is also obtained once in a while by branding or burning the wood with a hot iron. The Aucaners, who paint red and black devices on their large canoe paddles, represent exceptions to the general rule of showing only the natural wood shades.

Nearly all the pieces are utilitarian in origin and purpose, ⁴¹² but some of them are so highly carved as to be of little ^[431] practical use. These are much prized as gift pieces. The ^[415] trays are actually used to carry food on, and also for winnowing rice. The stirring paddles dip into the food pot every evening. After being used they are washed with river water and ^[264] hung up on a peg.

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In that can doubtless be seen the most likely explanation of the absence, in the tribes of Refugee Blacks, of any internal trade. There are not even markets in the villages. In practice only Creole and Asian traders are patronized.

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[438] The repugnance which the Refugee Blacks have for trading with one another contributes toward preventing the development of specialized professions among them. Specialization does actually exist: one man is particularly good at building boats, another is a competent carpenter, still another devotes himself mainly to fishing; but the Refugee Blacks exercise these specialties with respect to other peoples and not with respect to one another. Nobody fails to build his own boat, his house, to cut his clearings himself. If it were otherwise, classes and castes would rapidly be created, and that is precisely what the moral law of the Refugee Blacks condemns. A special effect of this conception is to preserve family custom from deteriorating, by preventing the rich from becoming great polygamists maintaining idle mistresses. We have never heard it said that a richer man paid someone to perform for him the customary work he owes to his wives, clearings, house, boat. Whatever his wealth may be, he continues to do these jobs by the sweat of his brow, and that contributes toward maintaining in its meaning and value the tacit contract concluded between husband and wife.

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648 Thus the geographic conditions, associated with influences of a social and psychological order, impose on the Refugee Blacks a unique economy, based on a symbiosis with the coast populations in the form of piece-work or temporary wage-earning.